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SUBJECT: NIGER: Request for Intervention to Gain the Liberation of  
Persons Held by Rebels

¶1. Government of Niger National Commission of Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties (CNDHLF) President, Lompo Garba, sent a letter (dated May 21, 2008) to U.S. Embassy Niamey requesting the Ambassador's intervention to gain the liberation of the CNDHLF Commissioner and other persons in the custody of Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice (MNJ) rebels. While the Embassy has not responded to the letter, an informal translation of the full text of the letter is provided for the Department's information.

¶2. Begin text.

Excellency Madame Ambassador,

During the night between May 14-15, 2008, around 23:00 hours, a group of armed persons abducted M. Ahamadou Ahalawey, Vice President of the National Commission of Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties (CNDHLF) of which I am the President, as well as one of his nephews who was serving as chauffeur.

The abduction took place in Tanout (Zinder Region) while the concerned was, in his capacity as national human rights commissioner, on a mission to promote human right and the culture of peace in this region of the country.

Undeniably, this vile act perpetrated against a senior officer from a high institution of the Republic, an untiring defender of human rights, unveils the true face of men who constitute and maintain a so-called rebellion named "Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice" (MNJ).

In fact, since the month of February 2007, Niger of which the experiences and democratic advances serve as a model to the African continent, is confronted with a notorious situation of insecurity in its northern region, a phenomenon that has caused a number of losses in human life notably from the use of anti-personnel mines, abductions and detentions in the desert of many civilians and military personnel.

The methods employed by this so-called movement gravely contrast the democratic values on which Niger is based, a country governed by the rule of law, peace-loving and of justice, and that has always demonstrated respect for democratic principles, particularly one for dialogue to resolve conflict through institutions established for this purpose.

The abduction of Mr. Ahalawey, a strong defender of human rights, demonstrates if need be, that the situation in northern Niger is due no more no less than to the acts of armed bandits. If not, how can one comprehend that they can attack a man who by his own functions as human rights commissioner should naturally be considered by them an ally with regard to their demands for justice in Niger.

Also, considering the anti-democratic nature of this armed group

that plagues northern Niger and, conscious of the grave risks that weigh on commissioner Ahalawey whose health condition has always been precarious (the concerned has undergone several surgical operations that constrain him to continuous medical attention), the CNDHLF requests in its strongest terms that you use your powers and means towards the liberation of this man as well as all the other hostages.

In counting on your immense human qualities, please accept, Excellency Madame Ambassador, the assurance of my highest consideration.

cc.: President of the Republic of Niger  
Prime Minister of Niger

End text.

ALLEN